DANGER!!—Being the Log of Capt. John Sirius—By SIR A. CONAN DOYLE

A Novelette of Extraordinary Timely Interest, Written Just Before the Opening of the Present Great War, and Showing How Great Britain Was (in Fiction) Starved Into Submission by a Submarine Campaign Like That Recently Undertaken by Germany. Conan Doyle Is One of England's Most Active Literary Defenders, and His Striking Story "DANGER" Was Evidently Written to Warn the British Government to Provide Some Effective Measures to Meet the Difficulties of Such an Attack on the Sources of Great Britain's Food Supply

By special arrangement, The Star is printing this remarkable story in three installments. The first was published yesterday, the second appears herewith and the third and concluding installment will be in tomorrow's Star. Star readers are advised to order tomorrow's Star in advance, as the supply is likely to be exhausted.

The story deals with a conflict between a minor European nation—presumably Holland, although not distinctly so stated—and Great Britain. The minor nation is about to yield to an ultimatum, when Capt. John Sirius, who is in command of a small submarine fleet, objects, and proposes that he can settle matters by a submarine campaign, similar to that now proposed by Germany. The story is told by Capt. Sirius.

Summary of the First Chapter.

England had sent an ultimatum to one of its tiniest neighbors, whose available sea strength was only two battleships, four cruisers, twenty torpedo boats and eight submarines. The king of the smaller country, with his prime minister, were openly in favor of a surrender to the terms of Great Britain. The admiral of the small nation's little fleet, however, persuaded the king to listen to Capt. John Sirius, in charge of the submarine flotilla. The king listened to the naval officer unfold an amazing plan to bring England to her knees in six weeks and humble the greatest fleet ever known in the world's history. Capt. Sirius prevailed upon his government to make no reply to the ultimatum of the Mistress of the Seas; and at 6 o'clock that night the two countries were in a state of war.

Capt. Sirius then started upon his plan to conquer England with eight submarines, with all war conditions, submarine mines, torpedo boats, cruisers, against him just as they would be in actual conflict.

There was no craft near us and our surface speed is nearly twice that of our submerged, so I blew out the tanks and our whaleback came over the surface. All night we were steering southwest, making an average of eighteen knots. At about 5 in the morning, as I stood alone upon my tiny bridge, I saw low down in the west the scattered lights of the Norfolk coast.

"Ah, Johnny, Johnny Bull," I said, as I looked at them, "you are going to have your lesson, and I am to be your master. It is I who have been chosen to teach you that one cannot live under artificial conditions and yet act as if they were natural ones. More foresight, Johnny, and less party politics—that is my lesson to you."

And then I had a wave of pity, too, when I thought of those vast droves of helpless people—Yorkshire miners, Lancashire spinners, Birmingham metal workers, the dockers and workers of London—over whose little homes I would bring the shadow of starvation. I seemed to see all those wasted, eager hands held out for food, and I, John Sirius, dashing it aside. Ah, well! war is war, and if one is foolish one must pay the price.

Just before daybreak I saw the lights of a considerable town, which must have been Yarmouth, bearing about ten miles west-southwest on our starboard bow. I took her further out, for it is a sandy, dangerous coast, with many shoals. At 5:30 we were abreast of the Lowestoft lightship. A coast guard was sending up flash signals, which faded into a pale twinkle as the white dawn crept over the water. There was a good deal of shipping about, mostly fishing boats and small coasting craft, with one large steamer hull down to the west and a torpedo destroyer between us and the land. It could not harm us, and yet I thought it as well that there should be no word of our presence, so I filled my tanks again and went down to ten feet. I was pleased to find that we got under in 150 seconds. The life of one's boat may depend upon this when a swift craft comes suddenly upon you.

We were now within a few hours of our cruising ground, so I determined to snatch a rest, leaving Vornal in charge. When he awoke me at 10 o'clock we were running on the surface and had reached the Essex coast off the Maplin Sands. With that charming frankness which is one of their characteristics our friends of England had informed us by their press that they had put a cordon of torpedo boats across the Straits of Dover to prevent the passage of submarines, which is about as sensible as to lay a wooden plank across a stream to keep the eels from passing. I knew that Stephan, whose station lay at the western end of the Solent, would have no difficulty in reaching it. My own cruising ground was to be the mouth of the Thames, and here I was at the very spot with my tiny Iota, my eighteen torpedoes, my quick-firing gun, and, above all, a brain that knew what should be done and how to do it.

When I resumed my place in the conning tower I saw in the periscope (for we had dived) that a lightship was within a few hundred yards of us upon the port bow. Two men were sitting on her bulwarks, but neither of them cast an eye upon the little rod that clove the water so close to them. It was an ideal day for submarine action, with enough ripple upon the surface to make us difficult to detect, and yet smooth enough to give me a clear view. Each of my three periscopes had an angle of sixty degrees, so that between them I commanded a complete semi-circle of the horizon. Two British cruisers were steaming north from the Thames within half a mile of me. I could easily have cut them off and attacked them had I allowed myself to be diverted from my great plan. Further south a destroyer was passing westward to Sheerness. A dozen small steamers were moving about. None of these was worthy of my notice. Great countries are not provisioned by small steamers. I kept the engines running at the lowest pace which would hold our position under water, and moving slowly across the estuary I waited for what must assuredly come. I had not long to wait.

Shortly after 1 o'clock I perceived in the periscope a cloud of smoke to the south. Half an hour later a large steamer raised her hull, making for the mouth of the Thames. I ordered Vornal to stand by the starboard torpedo tube, having the other also loaded in case of a miss. Then I advanced slowly, for, though the steamer was going very swiftly, we could easily cut her off. Presently I laid the Iota in a position near which she must pass and would very gladly have lain to, but could not for fear of rising to the surface. I therefore steered out in the direction from which she was coming. She was a very large ship—15,000 tons at the least—painted black above and red below, with two cream-colored funnels. She lay so low in the water that it was clear she had a full cargo. At her bows were a cluster of men, some of them looking, I dare say, for the first time at the mother country. How little could they have guessed the welcome that was waiting them!

On she came with the great plumes of smoke floating from her funnels, and two white waves foaming from her cutwater. She was within a quarter of a mile. My moment had arrived. I signaled full speed ahead and steered straight for her course. My timing was exact. At a hundred yards I gave the signal and heard the clank and swish of the discharge. At the same instant I put the helm hard down and flew off at an angle. There was a terrific lurch, which came from the distant explosion. For a moment we were almost upon our side. Then, after staggering and trembling, the Iota came on an even keel. I stopped the engines, brought her to the surface and opened the conning tower, while all my excited crew came crowding to the hatch to know what had happened.

The ship lay within 200 yards of us, and it was easy to see that she had her death blow. She was already settling down by the stern. There was a sound of shouting and people running wildly about her decks. Her name was visible—the Adela of London, bound, as we afterward learned, from New Zealand with frozen mutton. Strange as it may seem to you the notion of a submarine had never even now occurred to her people, and all were convinced that they had struck a floating mine. The starboard quarter had been blown in by the explosion and the ship was sinking rapidly. Their discipline was admirable. We saw boat after boat slip down crowded with people, as swiftly and quietly as if it were part of their daily drill.

And suddenly, as one of the boats lay off waiting for the others, they caught a glimpse for the first time of my conning tower so close to them. I saw them shouting and pointing, while the men in the other boats got up to have a better look at us. For my part I cared nothing, for I took it for granted that they already knew that a submarine had destroyed them. One of them clambered back into the sinking ship. I was sure that he was about to send a wireless message as to our presence. It mattered nothing, since in any case it must be known; otherwise I could easily have brought him down with a rifle. As it was, I waved my hand to them and they waved back at me. War is too big a thing to leave room for personal ill feeling, but it must be remorseless all the same.

I was still looking at the sinking Adela when Vornal, who was beside me, gave a sudden cry of warning and surprise, gripping me by the shoulder and turning my head. There behind us, coming up the fairway, was a huge black vessel with black funnels, flying the well known house flag of the P. & O. Company. She was not a mile distant, and I calculated in an instant that even if she had seen us she would not have time to turn and get away before we could reach her.

We went straight for her, therefore, keeping awash just as we were. They saw the sinking vessel in front of them and that little dark speck moving over the surface, and they suddenly understood their danger. I saw a number of men rush to the bows, and there was a rattle of rifle fire. Two bullets were flattened upon our four-inch armor. You might as well try to stop a charging bull with paper pellets as the Iota with rifle fire. I had learned my lesson from the Adela, and this time I had the torpedo discharged at a safer distance—250 yards. We caught her amidships and the explosion was tremendous, but we were well outside its area. She sank almost instantaneously.

I am sorry for her people, of whom I hear that more than 200, including 70 Lascars and 40 passengers, were drowned. Yes, I am sorry for them. But when I think of the huge floating granary that went to the bottom I rejoice as a man does who has carried out that which he plans.

It was a bad afternoon that for the P. & O. Company. The second ship which we destroyed was, as we have since learned, the Moldavia of 15,000 tons, one of their finest vessels; but about 3:30 we blew up the Cusco of 8,000 tons, of the same line, also from eastern ports and laden with corn. Why she came on in face of the wireless messages which must have warned her of danger I cannot imagine. The other two steamers which we blew up that day—the Maid of Athens (Robson line) and the Cormorant—were neither of them provided with apparatus and came blindly to their destruction. Both were small boats of from 5,000 to 7,000 tons. In the case of the second I had to rise to the surface and fire six twelve-pound shells under her water line before she would sink. In each case the crew took to the boats, and so far as I know no casualties occurred.

After that no more steamers came along, nor did I expect them. Warnings must by this time have been flying in all directions. But we had no reason to be dissatisfied with our first day. Between the Maplin Sands and the Nore we had sunk five ships of a total tonnage of about 50,000 tons. Already the London markets would begin to feel the pinch. And Lloyd's—poor old Lloyd's—what a demented state it would be in!

I could imagine the London evening papers and the howling in Fleet street. We saw the result of our actions, for it was quite laughable to see the torpedo boats buzzing like angry wasps out of Sheerness in the evening. They were darting in every direction across the estuary, and the aeroplanes and hydroplanes were like flights of crows, black dots against the red western sky. They quartered the whole river mouth until they discovered us at last.

Some sharp-sighted fellow with a telescope on board of a destroyer got a sight of our periscope and came for us full speed. No doubt he would very gladly have rammed us, even if it had meant his own destruction, but that was not part of our program at all. I sank her and ran her east-southeast, with an occasional rise. Finally we brought her to, not very far from the Kentish coast, and the searchlights of our pursuers were far on the western sky line. There we lay quietly all night, for a submarine at night is nothing more than a very third-rate surface torpedo boat. Besides, we were all weary and needed rest. Do not forget, you captains of men, when you grease and trim your pumps and compressors and rotators, that the human machine needs some tending also.

I had put up the wireless mast above the conning tower, and had no difficulty in calling up Capt. Stephan, who was lying, he said, off Ventnor and had been unable to reach his station on account of engine trouble, which he had now set right. Next morning he proposed to block the Southampton approach. He had destroyed one large Indian boat on his way down channel. We exchanged good wishes. Like myself, he needed rest.

I was up at 4 in the morning, however, and called all hands to overhaul the boat. She was somewhat up by the head, owing to the forward torpedoes having been used, so we trimmed her by opening the forward compensating tank, admitting as much water as the torpedoes had weighed. We also overhauled the starboard air compressor and one of the periscope motors which had been jarred by the shock of the first explosion. We had hardly got ourselves shipshape when the morning dawned.

I have no doubt that a good many ships which have taken refuge in the French ports at the first alarm had run across and got safely up the river in the night. Of course, I could have attacked them, but I do not care to take risks—and there are always risks for a submarine at night. But one had miscalculated his time, and there she was, just abreast of Warden point, when daylight disclosed her to us. In an instant we were after her. It was a near thing, for she was a flier and could do two miles to our one; but we just reached her as she went swashing by. She saw us at the last moment, for I attacked her awash, since otherwise we could not have had the pace to reach her.

She swung away, and the first torpedo missed, but the second took her full under the counter. Heavens, what a smash! The whole stern seemed to go aloft. I drew off and watched her sink. She went down in seven minutes, leaving her masts and funnels over the water and a cluster of her people holding onto them. She was the Virginia of the Bibby line—12,000 tons—and laden, like the others, with foodstuffs from the east. The whole surface of the sea was covered with the floating grain.

"John Bull will have to take up a hole or two of his belt if this goes on," said Vornal, as we watched the scene.

And it was at that moment that the very worst danger occurred that could befall us. I tremble now when I think how our glorious voyage might have been nipped in the bud. I had freed the hatch of my tower and was looking at the boats of the Virginia with Vornal beside me when there was a swish and a terrific splash in the water beside us, which covered us both with spray. We looked up, and you can imagine our feelings when we saw an aeroplane hovering a few hundred feet above us like a hawk. With its silencer it was perfectly noiseless, and had its bomb not fallen into the sea we should never have known what had destroyed us.

She was circling around in the hope of dropping a second one, but we shoved on all speed ahead, crammed down the rudders and vanished into the side of a roller. I kept the deflection indicator falling until I had put fifty good feet of water between the aeroplane and ourselves, for I knew well how deep they can see under the surface. However, we soon threw her off our track, and when we came to the surface near Margate there was no sign of her, unless she was one of several which we saw hovering over Herne bay.

There was not a ship in the offing save a few small coasters and little thousand-ton steamers, which were beneath my notice. For several hours I lay submerged with a blank periscope. Then I had an inspiration. Orders had been Marconied to every foodship to lie in French waters and dash across after dark. I was as sure of it as if they had been recorded in our own receiver. Well, if they were there, that was where I should be also.

I blew out the tanks and rose, for there was no sign of any warship near. They had some good system of signaling from the shore, however, for I had not got to the North Foreland before three destroyers came foaming after me, all converging from different directions. They had about as good a chance of catching me as three spaniels would of overtaking a porpoise. Out of pure bravado—I know it was very wrong—I waited until they were actually within gunshot. Then I sank and we saw each other no more.

It is, as I have said, a shallow, sandy coast, and submarine navigation is very difficult. The worst mishap that can befall a boat is to bury its nose in the side of a sand drift and be held there. Such an accident might have been the end of our boat, though with our Fluess cylinders and electric lamps we should have found no difficulty in getting out at the air lock and in walking ashore across the bed of the ocean. As it was, however, I was able, thanks to our excellent charts, to keep the channel and so to gain the open straits. There we rose about midday, but, observing a hydroplane at no great distance, we sank again for half an hour. When we came up for the second time all was peaceful around us and the English coast was lining the whole western horizon. We kept outside the Goodwins and straight down channel until we saw a line of black dots in front of us, which I knew to be the Dover-Calais torpedo boat cordon. When two miles distant we dived and came up again seven miles to the southwest, without one of them dreaming that we had been within thirty feet of their keels.

When we rose a large steamer flying the German flag was within half a mile of us. It was the North German Lloyd Altona, from New York to Bremen. I raised our whole hull and dipped our flag to her. It was amusing to see the amazement of her people at what they must have regarded as our unparalleled impudence in those English swept waters. They cheered us heartily, and the tricolor flag was dipped in greeting as they went roaring past us. Then I stood in to the French coast.

It was exactly as I had expected. There were three great British steamers lying at anchor in Boulogne outer harbor. They were the Caesar, the King of the East and the Pathfinder, none less than 10,000 tons. I suppose they thought they were safe in French waters, but what did I care about three-mile limits and international law! The view of my government was that England was blockaded, food contraband, and vessels carrying it to be destroyed. The lawyers could argue about it afterward. My business was to starve the enemy any way I could. Within an hour the three ships were under the waves and the Iota was steaming down the Picardy coast looking for fresh victims. The channel was covered with English torpedo boats buzzing and whirling like a cloud of midges. How they thought they could hurt me I cannot imagine, unless by accident I were to come up underneath one of them. More dangerous were the aeroplanes which circled here and there.

The water being calm I had several times to descend as deep as a hundred feet before I was sure that I was out of their sight. After I had blown up the three ships at Boulogne I saw two aeroplanes flying down channel, and I knew that they would head off any vessels which were coming up. There was one very large white steamer lying off Havre, but she steamed west before I could reach her. I dare say Stephan or one of the others would get her before long. But those infernal aeroplanes spoiled our sport for that day. Not another steamer did I see save the never-ending torpedo boats. I consoled myself with the reflection, however, that no food was passing me on its way to London. That was what I was there for, after all. If I could do it without spending my torpedoes all the better. Up to date I had fired ten of them and sunk nine steamers, so I had not wasted my weapons. That night I came back to the Kent coast and lay upon the bottom in shallow water near Dungeness.

We were all trimmed and ready at the first break of day, for I expected to catch some ships which had tried to make the Thames in the darkness and had miscalculated their time. Sure enough, there was a great steamer coming up channel and flying the American flag. It was all the same to me what flag she flew so long as she was engaged in conveying contraband of war to the British Isles. There were no torpedo boats about at the moment, so I ran out on the surface and fired a shot across her bows. She seemed inclined to go on, so I put a second one just above her water line on her port bow. She stopped then and a very angry man began to gesticulate from the bridge. I ran the Iota almost alongside.

"Are you the captain?" I asked.

"What the ———" I won't attempt to reproduce his language.

"You have foodstuffs on board?" I said.

"It's an American ship, you blind beetle!" he cried. "Can't you see the flag? It's the Vermondia of Boston."

"Sorry, captain," I answered. "I have really no time for words. Those shots of mine will bring the torpedo boats, and I dare say at this very moment your wireless is making trouble for me. Get your people into the boats."

I had to show him I was not bluffing, so I drew off and began putting shells into him just on the water line. When I had knocked six holes in his ship he was very busy on his boats. I fired twenty shots altogether, and no torpedo was needed, for she was lying over with a terrible list to port, and presently came right on to her side. There she lay for two or three minutes before she foundered. There were eight boats crammed with people lying round her when she went down. I believe everybody was saved, but I could not wait to inquire. From all quarters the poor old panting, useless war vessels were hurrying. I filled my tanks, ran our bows under and came up fifteen miles to the south. Of course, I knew there would be a big row afterward—as there was—but that did not help the starving crowds round the London bakers, who only saved their skins, poor devils, by explaining to the mob that they had nothing to bake.

By this time I was becoming rather anxious, as you can imagine, to know what was going on in the world and what England was thinking about it all. I ran alongside a fishing boat, therefore, and ordered them to give up their papers. Unfortunately, they had none, except a rag of an evening paper, which was full of nothing but betting news. In a second attempt I came alongside a small yachting party from Eastbourne, who were frightened to death at our sudden appearance out of the depths. From them we were lucky enough to gt the London Courier of that very morning.

It was interesting reading—so interesting that I had to announce it all to the crew. Of course, you know the British style of headline, which gives you all the news at a glance. It seemed to me that the whole paper was headlines, it was in